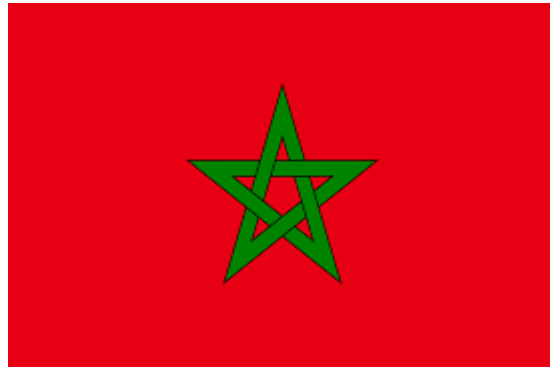


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Morocco



History and facts:

Morocco is a kingdom in northern Africa, bordered by the Atlantic Ocean, the Mediterranean Sea and the Sahara desert. Translated, the name Morocco means "the western kingdom, or "place the sun sets".

Morocco has a history of independence like no other North African country, but from 1912 until 1956 it became a French/ Spanish protectorate, which explains why most Moroccans speak French and in the North some speak Spanish. The culture is a blend of Arab, Berber and European influence, though Berber is the indigenous people of Morocco, with their own language and flag, making up 40% of the population. The Arabic language spoken in Morocco is "Darija", an Arabic dialect. The Berber flag below symbolises the "free man" or "Amazigh", as the Berber call themselves. The flag stands for all Amazigh people living in harmony with their land.



Islam and the Arabic language were brought into Morocco in the 7th century by the Umayyad Caliphate, which at one point counted 62 million people, making it one of the largest empires in history, covering all of the Middle East, northern Africa and most of Spain and Portugal. Morocco's Berber tribes adopted Islam but kept their own customs and laws.

Geography:

Morocco has two mountain ranges, the Rif Mountains, which stretch over the region bordering the Mediterranean Sea from the north-west to the north-east. The Atlas Mountains are the backbone of the country, running from the north-east to the south-west. Both ranges are mainly inhabited by the Berber people. The highest mountain is the Toubkal at 4167m. Most of the south-east of the country lies in the Sahara desert and is sparsely populated. The west coast borders the Atlantic Ocean which offers lots of

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beaches, fishing villages and ports, the biggest port belongs to the city of Casablanca. Morocco lies only 8 miles from Europe.



Weather and Climate:

Considering that Morocco is a northern hemisphere country, it has essentially four seasons (winter, spring, summer, autumn) and the following climate zones:

Mediterranean: it dominates the coastal Mediterranean regions and some parts of the Atlantic coast. Summers are hot and dry, winters are mild and wet. (Tangier)

Sub-Mediterranean: there are two main influencing climates:

- **Oceanic:** cooler summers and chilly to mild and wet winters (Casablanca, Essaouira)
- **Continental:** hot summers and cold winters with snowfall, in the mountainous regions of the North and central parts of the country (Fes, Meknes, Azilal)

Alpine: very warm summers and cold and snowy winters, in the middle Atlas Mountains and the eastern part of the high Atlas Mountains. (Ifrane)

Semi-arid: this climate is found in the south of the country and some parts of the east. Annual rain fall is low (Agadir, Marrakech). South of Agadir and east near the Algerian border, arid and desert climate prevails.



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Moroccan Cuisine:

The food in Morocco is mainly a fusion between Berber, European and Mediterranean cuisines. It is considered one of the most diverse in the world. Spices are used extensively, especially ingredients like saffron, mint, olives, oranges and lemons, which are grown in the country. The meat most eaten is chicken, followed by beef and lamb. The most famous Moroccan dishes are couscous, Tajine and Harira (soup). Bread plays a big part in daily meals and bakeries are very common throughout Morocco.

Tea (green tea with mint and sugar, sometimes called Berber whisky) is the most popular drink and is considered an art form. It is served throughout the day and especially to guests. To refuse it is considered impolite.

Travel Insurance:

Due to the nature of this trip it is important that you have a good Insurance that can assist you in a helicopter evacuation if needed. We recommend that you use www.worldnomads.com. Travel insurance is mandatory and we will ask you for your insurance details before the start of the trip so we have it handy in case of an emergency.

Flights to Morocco:

Because of its proximity to Europe, a lot of airlines have Morocco included in their destinations, for example EasyJet and Ryan Air. Therefore, flights are very affordable and frequent and take around 4 hours from central Europe. We recommend flying directly into Marrakech Menara airport (RAK).

Taxis:

To get into the city from the airport, you can get a taxi just outside. The airport is located at 5 km from the city centre, the drive takes maximum half an hour, depending on traffic. Be aware of the tourist prices the taxi drivers ask. You should not pay more than maximum 100 MAD for the journey. Never enter a taxi without meter or agreed fare.

Money:

The currency in Morocco is the Dirham (MAD). It is a restricted currency, meaning that it cannot be taken out of the country and is not available abroad. Euros, USD and British pounds can easily be exchanged but ATMs are the easiest way to access your money and are widely available.

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Dirham comes in notes up to 200 and coins of Dh1, Dh2, Dh5 and Dh10. As an example, 100 Dh is around 9 Euros. It is a quite stable currency. The main credit cards are MasterCard and Visa, however it is advisable to have cash on you, especially for shopping in the souks.

It is very common in the souks (markets) and shops to haggle about the prices and most items have no price tag. You get used to it and it is part of the culture, otherwise you end up paying horrendous tourist prices and insulting the locals.

Visas:

British, US or any EU country citizens can stay up to 3 months without needing a visa. Just make sure you get an entry stamp with the date of your arrival in the country and your passport needs to be valid for at least another 6 months.

Hotels and camping:

Our hotel in Marrakech is only a few minutes' walk from the famous Place Djema El-Fna and the souks, opposite the mosque. Once we arrive at the river, we will be camping at the side of the river in beautiful beach camp spots.

Food and drinks on the river:

During the river trip, we will be cooking delicious western type meals in our camp kitchen (almost everything is available to buy in Morocco). Soft drinks and alcoholic beverages (beer and wine) will be available. We recommend to bring your own spirits (duty free) if you desire them. (Even though Morocco is a Muslim country, alcohol is available for tourists).

Water levels on the Ahansel river:

The Ahansel River is located in the Atlas Mountains and is fed by snowmelt and rain. Because of that, the water is cold and you need to bring a wet suit/dry suit. The rafting season is in spring from March until May, depending on how much snow there is. The white water is continuous and fun class III/IV.

Health and vaccines:

You should make sure that your general vaccines are up to date, such as:

- Typhoid
- Tetanus
- Hepatitis A

The most common issues to be aware of on a trip to Morocco are sunburn, hypothermia and gastro intestinal problems from eating foreign foods that our stomachs aren't used to. We recommend to bring a good sunblock, thermal clothing to wear on and off the river, and be careful what you eat in the markets.

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First Aid:

On all of our trips we carry a complete First Aid kit and most of the guide team are trained to high international standards in first aid (EMT).

We also carry a Satellite phone with us for any emergency situations.

Wildlife:

The most common animal you will see in Marrakech are the snakes of the snake charmers in the Place Djema El-Fna. Whilst camping and on the river there are no animals to be afraid of. Also insects are not a big issue, due to the fact that Morocco lies above the Sahara desert. You will likely encounter camels and donkeys which are used as transport.

Cameras and Photos:

We don't employ a kayak photographer since nowadays everyone brings their own camera or phone with them. But after every trip we set up a google drive to share our photos from our trip with each other.

Charging electronics:

Although we are in the middle of nowhere we are still able to charge up certain items like your cell phone for when going back into the city. We have a solar panel with a battery that works wonders on our trips. If you have your own solar charger, bring it with you.

Internet and phones:

Moroccan SIM cards are available in Marrakech and credit for calls and internet data can be found on many street corners. Be aware though that in some remote places (on the river, for example) you won't have network coverage and Facebook/WhatsApp can be blocked by the government.

Souvenirs:

Marrakech offers great shopping experiences and you can find pretty much anything in the souks (market) from clothes to shoes to carpets, handicraft, food, spices, lamps, jewellery etc. We recommend to spend at least a couple hours getting lost in the souks, it is part of the experience. Don't forget to haggle over prices.

Activities and places to visit:

Morocco has a lot to offer due to its geography. Mountain trekking, desert trips on camels, beaches and great surf on the Atlantic coast, to name just a few.

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Morocco is blessed with some of the worlds most dramatic and beautiful mountains and a broad range of climate.

High Atlas Mountains: the home of North Africas highest peak, Jebel Toubkal and other stunning peaks to climb

The Rif: this mountain range offers a diversity and abundance of hiking trails, including the Talassemtane national park.

Sahara desert: wind and sometimes rain shape the dunes in the desert, the biggest and most visited dunes are Erg Chigaga, (erg= dune sea) reaching 300ft in height and span approx. 40 km.

Essaouira: the "wind city of Africa" is great for windsurfing and a beautiful town with city walls, a fishing harbour and souks.

Agadir: a busy beach resort, offering a sheltered sandy beach, safe swimming and 300 days of sunshine.

Fez: the second largest city in Morocco is famous for its Medina (walled city) which is a World Heritage Site, and its tanneries, which are still operated the same ways as in the early centuries. Fez is considered the cultural and spiritual capital of Morocco and it is home to the Royal Palace.

Ouarzazate: this desert town lies on the old trans-Saharan trade route and is home to the Moroccan film studios and a 30 min drive to the UNESCO listed **Kasbah Ait Benhaddou**, a historic landmark and popular film destination.

Things to consider:

Since Morocco is a Muslim country, women are expected to cover their shoulders and legs. Men should also cover their shoulders (no tank tops). Don't eat with your left hand, the right hand is for greeting and eating. Don't enter a taxi without meter or agreed fare. Don't take photos of snakes and monkeys without paying (Marrakech).

Tips:

The guide team, on these trips go out of their way to ensure that you have a safe and enjoyable vacation. Not only do they guide the gear rafts safely through the white water but they also shop for your food and set up your camp kitchen and toilet. As guides tend to work for simply the love of being on expedition it is a custom to leave a tip for the guide team. We recommend leaving 10% of what you paid for the trip. This can be passed to the trip leader who will then share it amongst the whole team, from Guides to translators and driver

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For more info or specific questions
contact us on:

miniraftseurope@gmail.com

